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Wilson Opens Spring Meeting Sermon With Call to Christ's Righteousness

"Our only hope" at history's close, Adventist world church leader says

12 April 2011, Huntsville, Alabama, United States [Mark A. Kellner, Adventist Review]

Capping a morning of joyous singing, scripture contemplation and heartfelt prayer, Pastor Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist world church, delivered a call to seek Christ's "all-encompassing righteousness" at the Oakwood University Seventh-day Adventist Church in Huntsville, Alabama, United States today.

The message came during Sabbath worship at the start of the Adventist world church's spring leadership meetings, being held at the Oakwood campus this year, instead of its usual location at the church's Silver Spring, Maryland, headquarters.

"Christ's all-encompassing righteousness is our only hope as we rapidly come to the close of earth's history," Wilson said to an onsite congregation of approximately 2,100 as well as a live global television and Internet audience. "Seventh-day Adventists have been called to proclaim the truth as it is in Jesus. He and He alone is our salvation," he added.

Wilson said Christ "calls us to accept His righteousness and to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to accomplish the last great work of proclaiming Christ, His righteousness, and His soon coming. This is the message that has been entrusted to the Seventh-day Adventist Church as His last-day remnant people."

He added, "At this critical moment in earth's history, with the world collapsing around us, let us humble ourselves before the Lord realizing that our only hope is in Christ and His righteousness."

Wilson quoted Ellen G. White, a pioneering co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist movement and the founding influence behind the establishment of what is now Oakwood University, who wrote, "A revival of true godliness among us is the utmost and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work." (Selected Messages, Book 1, page 121)

Referring to the Church's current theme, Wilson said, "This call for revival and reformation is not some legalistic, 'pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps' kind of religion. It is centered in Christ and Him alone."

He added, "The voices of Seventh-day Adventists should be the foremost in proclaiming that salvation is through Christ and Christ alone! The two great provisions of salvation -- justification and sanctification -- cannot be separated for they constitute the fullness of Christ's all-encompassing righteousness."

The message followed a service that highlighted the musical talents of many Oakwood University students and staff, particularly its orchestra and the Aeolians, the school's renowned choral group. Following a scripture reading in English and Koine Greek, the latter by a student, the Aeolians presented a praise number, "It PAYS to Serve Jesus," which brought many in the congregation to their feet praising God at its conclusion.

"We've already had the sermon," Wilson said as he took to the podium following the rousing musical appeal, offering affirmation to the University and its constituency: "Here at Oakwood University, you are a vital part of God's worldwide family."

That "worldwide family" was also a key target of Wilson's message, with the leader telling his hearers the conversion process is "only something that God can produce."

When conversion happens, Wilson added, that is "why drunkards become sober. That's why loose-living people become moral. That's why mean-spirited individuals become peacemakers. That's why liars become honest. That is why filthy-minded people become pure. That is why evolutionists become creationists. That is why selfish, self-centered people become selfless, generous benefactors. That is why the unconverted become converted. ...[I]t is all due to the power of God."

Again quoting Ellen White, this time from her book Steps to Christ, Wilson read, "Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ." (Steps to Christ, page 70)

The church leader cautioned his hearers against any sense of spiritual superiority apart from God's grace: "Let no one in the Seventh-day Adventist Church think of themselves as better than anyone else. Let no one accuse others of not being holy or perfect. We are all sinners at the foot of the cross in need of a Savior who provides for us His all-encompassing righteousness in justification and sanctification. We owe everything to Jesus and our relationship with Him."

He added, "The character of Christ is perfectly reproduced in our lives when we lean completely on Christ alone. It is not in ourselves to accomplish this."
not in ourselves to accomplish this.

Asking how Adventists are to understand the plan of salvation, Wilson supplied several possibilities.

"Cheap grace will not do it. It denies the power of the Holy Spirit to change the life day by day to become more and more like Christ," he said. "Legalism will not do it. It blocks the only way to salvation -- total dependence on Jesus Christ, our only way to salvation. An intellectual, higher critical approach will not. It destroys the very miracle of conversion and sanctification and strips God's salvation of its power to change lives."

The answer, Wilson declared, "is [that] only Christ's all-encompassing righteousness of justification and sanctification ... will save you, change you, and nurture you into a true disciple of Christ. It is something that Jesus does both for you and in you."

Click here to read the full text of Wilson's sermon. [teoNEWS]

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[teoNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter's Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: tednews@ted-adventist.org
Website: www.ted-adventist.org]

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Evangelism Reports Begin Spring Meeting Business Sessions

Council on Evangelism and Witness highlights regional outreach; Great Controversy book distribution preview
12 April 2011, Huntsville, Alabama, United States [Ansel Oliver, ANN] Top regional leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist world church shared reports on evangelism efforts in their territories during the Council on Evangelism and Witness, which lasted throughout the first morning of business at Spring Meeting on April 10.

Presidents of many of the denomination’s 13 world divisions highlighted how coordinated outreach approaches are leading people to join the church, while others supported an initiative to widely distribute versions of the book The Great Controversy, written by church co-founder Ellen G. White.

One president shared the results of a public perception survey in his region. “That’s risky if you’re not secure,” said Mark Finley, assistant to the president for evangelism.

Finley led the presentations at McKee auditorium at Oakwood University in Huntsville, Alabama, United States, where some 130 members of the world church’s Executive Committee met for two days of business meetings.

Isaak Leito, president of the church’s Inter-American Division, shared how a recent division-wide program lead to 15,000 baptisms in one day last month. More than 60,000 people have joined the Adventist Church in the division so far this year, he said.

Finley said slower-growth areas are also seeing renewed support for evangelism.

Dan Jackson, president of the North American Division, said a recent initiative comprising 130 small groups in the city of Houston in Texas led to 400 baptisms there in February. A similar meeting series will launch in New York soon and will include some 400 small groups leading up to a September decision invitation meeting.

“We’re hoping to generate a huge blessing, a huge reaping for God,” Jackson said.

He added that having more lay members supporting pastors in evangelism yields greater success.

Because of that, the Sabbath School/Personal Ministries department announced the launch of “Go 7 Million,” a name reminiscent of the discontinued initiative “Go One Million.” The initiative encourages the denomination to identify 7 million lay members to get involved in local outreach programs.

Leaders of the Miami-based Inter-American Division hope to reach a target of 1 million people for Go 7 Million. The division’s Sabbath School/Personal Ministries associate director Samuel Telemaque even led the committee in chanting “Go seven million for Christ,” the third time telling the group, “shout it so loud they can hear you in Papua New Guinea in the South Pacific Division.” Telemaque said the division has set a target of 1 million new members by 2014 through Go 7 Million.

It was undetermined how many other divisions will join in the initiative.

Committee delegates also received reports on outreach in large cities, where most initiatives are conducted through media.

“This is almost impossible to do without communication,” said Erton Kohler, president of the South American Division.

Church officials in South America are conducting outreach in Sao Paulo, Brazil — at 20 million people, the world’s 3rd largest city.

There, the denomination has set up a media center in a rented facility on Paulista Avenue, one of the wealthiest commercial areas of the city, similar to New York’s Times Square. A small congregation has also been established. Still, about U.S. $40 million is still needed to purchase the property, Kohler said.

The church in Brazil has some 400 broadcast television channels in cities throughout the country, as well as channels on a major cable delivery system. The Adventist Church will soon launch a television channel in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Kohler said.

Finley said the church has grown through deliberate planning in Chennai, India, the world’s 4th largest city. There are now 25,000 members worshipping in 166 churches there, up from 750 members in 12 churches 10 years ago, he said. Tithe in that region has also increased, nearly U.S. $30,000 a month, up from $1,000 a month.
A media center in Chennai is producing programming, mainly sermons, which match programming commonly found on network television, said Kandus Thorpe, a vice president for Hope Channel. The Adventist Church has taken this approach because of the abundance of television in homes. The government distributes small televisions in the region, Thorpe said.

Hope Channel is also expanding its operations in Asia, with increased programming in local languages.

In Australia and New Zealand, a public survey of perceptions of the Adventist Church revealed how traditional methods of outreach may need further re-adjustment.

The survey, coordinated by the South Pacific Division Communication department, reported that Adventists were seen as the “go-to people for health and well-being” and those who promoted Sabbath rest. The majority of survey respondents, however, had no perception of the church. Division President Barry Oliver said leaders are expected to follow up with plans based on the survey later this year.

Committee delegates also received a report on the church’s Great Controversy Project, designed to distribute copies of the book beginning in 2012.

Versions of The Great Controversy will be printed for less than one U.S. dollar, and leaders hope that some members will sponsor distribution in certain world regions.

“The world is desperate for answers now. Years from now these books will do the work we cannot do,” said Delbert Baker, a world church general vice president.

Baker said project leaders were “sensitive” to concerns in some regions; two cover options will be available – one cover features a portrayal of the Second Coming of Christ, while another is designed for those less familiar with religion.

The South American Division is already running with the project. Already, 30 million copies of the book have been committed and 1 million copies were distributed in Sao Paulo the previous day, Kohler said.

One local conference has ordered 1.7 million copies and has begun fundraising for the initiative, with pastors showing their support by each donating a month’s salary.

“This is a special opportunity to do something special for God,” Kohler said.

Many church leaders were featured in a video presentation about how the book had personally influenced their lives, as well as people who converted to the Adventist Church after reading the book.

Clinton Wahien, a member of the denomination’s Biblical Research Institute said he was an atheist before he read The Great Controversy to learn about Christianity.

Paul Ratsara, president of the church’s Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, said he believed The Great Controversy Project was a “God-sent initiative.”

Ratsara said an influential Johannesburg, South Africa, businesswoman of another Christian denomination was given a copy of the book and chose to join the church through baptism in October.

“We’re passionate about this in [our division],” he said.

The book will be released in several versions, including the original, an abbreviated version, one for kids, and an additional version that includes excerpts from another of the author’s books, Steps to Christ. Parts of the initiative will also be promoted on social media, Baker said.

Two project websites are expected to launch as distribution plans progress, leaders said.

--The morning devotional was presented by Ron Clouzet, director of the North American Division Evangelism Institute and professor of Christian Ministry and Pastoral Theology at Andrews University. To read his devotional, click here.

--To listen to Clouzet’s devotional, click here. [tedNEWS]

TedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter’s Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: tednews@ted-adventist.org
Website: www.ted-adventist.org

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Adventist Leaders Stress Follow-up in Unresolved Audit Findings, Transparency in Administration

Discussion begins to be continued in October 2010 title tops $2 billion

12 April 2011, Huntsville, Alabama, United States [Mark A. Kellner, Adventist Review] World leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist world church stressed a continuing need for transparency and accountability in financial reporting during an April 10 business session of the denomination's Spring Meeting.

“We need to be united and set the right tone as officers ... we must work together as a team, all the way through the system,” said Adventist world church President Ted N.C. Wilson, responding to a report presented by world church Treasurer Robert E. Lemon and General Conference Auditing Services (GCAS) director Paul H. Douglass.

The 12-page document on transparency -- the product of a task force composed of Lemon, Douglass, North American Division Treasurer Tom Evans and GCAS associate director Robyn W. Kajuura -- stressed concerns raised by the GCAS Board and its chairman, Jack L. Krogsstad. Krogsstad, a layman who holds the Union Pacific Endowed Chair in Accountancy at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, was recently an Academic Fellow in the Office of the Chief Accountant at the United States Securities and Exchange Commission. Those concerns followed a GCAS report "which included the frequency of certain audit findings and the recurring unresolved nature of those findings," as stated in the document.

The GCAS document, "Transparency and Accountability in Financial Reporting," suggested a need to improve church leadership culture at all organizational levels, that better controls result from a better culture, that "communication is at the core of effective governance," and that the result would be greater confidence from all church stakeholders, or constituents.

"It's not an auditing issue: it's a character issue," said Juan Prestol, Adventist world church under treasurer, during discussion of the matter. "An audit is too late," he explained to Adventist Review after his remarks, since audits only discover issues after the fact.

What is needed, he added, are "changes in the DNA of Adventist leadership."

Wilson said board members should be unafraid to question items presented to them. "On committees, ask questions. Don't assume somebody else is going to take care of it," he said.

Added North American Division President Dan Jackson, "There ought not to be friends in boardrooms ... if I sit on that board and respond to issues on that board because I'm a friend, I really have no business being on that board. You need to challenge me and do it with a smile."

Ella Simmons, a world church general vice president, stressed the need for an even higher approach. "I would challenge us to total commitment to holistic stewardship. Of course we focus on financial operations, but how can we operate [with] integrity and [in] ethical ways if we do not value ethical behavior in every area of our work, of our being, our relationships, our quality in performance. It must be holistic," she said.

Wilson promised further discussions on the subject at the 2011 Annual Council, to be held in October in Silver Spring, Maryland.

In an earlier address, Lemon said the church's finances showed improvement in 2010.

"Worldwide tithe passed the US$2 billion mark in 2010," Lemon said. "In spite of the recession and slow recovery of the economy in the U.S., the economies of most of the countries of the world have continued to be strong," he said.

That strength is reflected in tithe and offering figures, he added. Worldwide tithe rose 8.2 percent, totaling U.S. $2,002 million. Tithes in the North American Division increased 1.1 percent over 2009, totaling U.S. $887 million in 2010 compared to U.S. $877 million the previous year. Tithes from divisions outside of North America rose 14.6 percent and totaled U.S. $1,114 billion compared to U.S. $972 million.

The exchange rate to the U.S. dollar explains some of the increase, but "much of it was from increases in local currencies," Lemon said.

"It is inspiring to see the faithfulness of God's children in returning their tithes and giving offerings for the support of His work even in tough times," Lemon added.

Lemon also noted that costs to the world headquarters for the 2010 General Conference Session in Atlanta, Georgia, though budgeted at US$6.2 million came in under budget at US$5.5 million.

Independent auditors for the General Conference, as well as the various pension plan funds associated with the world
headquarters and the North American Division, gave all accounts unqualified positive opinions that generally accepted accounting principles were met across the board.

Undertreasurer Prestol added that the General Conference's balance sheet, for the first three months of 2011, "is $2.6 million to the good," which he said means the organization is "doing very well" so far.

Click here to read the full treasurer's report. [tedNEWS]

tedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter’s Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: tednews@ted-adventist.org
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Mission Focus Highlight's Spring Meeting Opening

*Business session to address finances, including transparency in accounting*

09 April 2011, Huntsville, Alabama, United States [Ansel Oliver, ANN]

Seventh-day Adventist leaders highlighted church mission, both within and outside its own walls, at the Friday night opening of Spring Meeting, one of the denomination’s two major annual business meetings.

Delegates also approved the meeting agenda as Sabbath began, before holding a spiritual service at McKee Auditorium at Oakwood University in Huntsville, Alabama, United States.

Executive Secretary G. T. Ng called for mission efforts to not neglect people who are already members. Without many choosing to leave the church, world membership would now likely be 24 million instead of the nearly 17-million at present, Ng said.

“Nurture is part of our mission. We just read that in our mission statement, unless I need new glasses,” Ng said.

Other leaders also challenged the church to include a variety of people in mission. Ministry magazine Editor Derek Morris called for the church to increasingly include specialized professionals in assisting pastors with ministry. He read from the sixth chapter of Acts, in which a growing church called for other Spirit-filled people to assist with the work, allowing pastors to focus solely on ministering.

Friday night’s service opened the weekend meeting of the denomination’s Executive Committee. Business sessions will be held Sunday and Monday.

The committee is meeting this week at Oakwood University, an institution directly affiliated with the denomination’s world headquarters.

The Friday evening service also featured testimonies and music from students of the University, a historically Black institution.

The service was broadcast on Hope Channel, the denomination’s television network.

Business sessions are periodically held at sites away from the church’s world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Beginning Sunday, delegates are expected to address agenda items that include:

- Transparency and accountability measures in financial reporting.

- A review of compensation.

- Confirming upcoming international Bible Conferences.

- An update on a Middle East and Mediterranean Survey commission, which is studying a possible realignment of church administrative structure in the region.

- Electing an associate director of the Stewardship department at the world headquarters.

Spring Meeting is one of two major annual meetings of the Executive Committee and addresses budget and finances. Top leaders from each of the church’s 13 world divisions are present. The other, Annual Council, held each October, typically addresses a wider range of items, including policy, and also includes presidents of each of the church’s Union administrative units. [tdeoNEWS]

**tdeoNEWS Staff:** Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter’s Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: tednews@ted-adventist.org
Website: www.ted-adventist.org

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Recommitment to Freedom of Belief Urged at Annual Religious Liberty Event in Washington

Recent assassination of religious freedom advocate Bhattal a reminder for renewed support
07 April 2011, Washington, D.C. [Bettina Krause/IRLA, ANN] Last month’s assassination of Pakistani cabinet minister and religious freedom advocate Shahbaz Bhattal added a somber note to the April 5 Religious Liberty Dinner in Washington, D.C.

More than 200 government officials, ambassadors, religious leaders and religious liberty advocates stood for a minute of silence to honor Bhattal and the many others around the world who over the past year have suffered persecution, imprisonment, or death for their faith.


Bhattal, the only Christian in Pakistan’s cabinet, was gunned down on March 2 by members of Pakistan’s Taliban, who objected to his outspoken criticism of the country’s discriminatory blasphemy laws.

In an emotional address, Knox Thamser, a friend and colleague of Shabaz Bhattal, and director of policy and research at the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, told the audience they could best remember this man of integrity by "making his death matter" and continuing his work.

Dr. Suzan Johnson Cook, U.S. President Barak Obama’s nominee for the position of Religious Freedom Ambassador-at-Large, was the evening’s keynote speaker. She praised the work of the IRLA and called on all those present to recommit themselves to the effort of protecting and preserving freedom of conscience worldwide.

Quoting Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Cook said the path to living in peace with others involves learning to "listen to and learn from those who think differently from ourselves."

Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, opened the evening, saying that religious liberty is part of the "DNA of the Adventist Church." He reaffirmed the church’s longstanding commitment to promote such freedom for all people, no matter their faith tradition.

Three advocates of religious freedom were also honored at the dinner:

-Norway’s former Bishop of Oslo Gunnar Stålslett received the Religious Liberty International Award for his lifetime efforts in promoting peace and reconciliation between people of different faith traditions.
-Norway’s former Bishop of Oslo, Gunnar Stålslett, was honored for his lifetime work of promoting peace across faith communities.
-Kill Bigelow, former external affairs director for the National Spiritual Assembly of Bahá’ís, for her 25 years of human rights advocacy, both at the United Nations and in Washington.

-Edwards Woods III, volunteer director of the Lake Region Chapter of the North American Religious Liberty Association, received this year’s A.T. Jones medal for his grassroots activism in building up religious liberty support across Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Indiana. [tedNEWS]

tedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter’s Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3JE, England
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Adventists Are Fastest-Growing Denomination In North America

01 April 2011 USA [Global News, sidly.com] The Seventh-Day Adventist Church has long been known for quaint beliefs and rigid regulations, but surprisingly it is the fastest-growing Christian denomination in North America at the moment.

Data shows Seventh-Day Adventism growing by 2.5% in North America annually, whereas Southern Baptists and other denominations are declining.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, or Mormons, registered 1.4 percent growth. Their denomination also prioritizes numeric growth.

Observers are surprised by the gains being posted by Adventism, known for resting on the Sabbath, and adhering to Old Testament dietary laws, including vegetarianism.

"You’ve got a denomination that is basically going back to basics ... saying, ‘What did God mean by all these rules and regulations and how can we fit in to be what God wants us to be?’," said Daniel Shaw, an expert on Christian missionary outreach at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California.

"That’s just totally contrary to anything that’s happening in American culture. So I’m saying, ‘Whoa! That’s very interesting.’ And I can’t answer it," he added.

Within their ranks, however, the Seventh-Day Adventists are thinking of growing more in North America, which only has 1.1 million of the 16 million Adventists worldwide. The church is growing almost twice as fast elsewhere.

"We don’t feel that we’re growing very much, and that is a source of concern, especially for North America," according to Ron Clouzet, director of the North American Division Evangelism Institute at Andrews University, located in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Clouzet pointed out that within the church, the Hispanic Adventists are "the one group that is growing very well. If we didn’t have that group, we would look even more dismal."

Adventists have been stepping up evangelism efforts both in the U.S. and globally. In 2009, nearly 80% of the 6,000 Adventist congregations in North America held long-term outreach events in hotels and other venues.

In the Pacific Northwest, traditionally one of the most non-religious regions of the U.S., the denomination has started "Christian cafes", where people can sit back and relax while asking questions about the church, without pressure.
[tedNEWS]

TedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deona Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter’s Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
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Remembrance: McFarland Helped Millions Quit Smoking with Five-day Plan

24 Mar 2011, Loma Linda, California, United States [Ansel Oliver, ANN]
Dr. J. Wayne McFarland, a Seventh-day Adventist health advocate who co-authored the Five Day Plan to Stop Smoking, which drew millions to seminars in the 1960s, died March 14 at a retirement facility in Loma Linda, California. He was 97.

Dr. J. Wayne McFarland helped millions quit smoking as the co-author of the Five Day Plan to Stop Smoking. Above, he addresses a luncheon at the Sheraton-Chicago hotel in 1969. [photo courtesy McFarland family]

McFarland and co-author Elman J. Folkenberg released the smoking cessation program at a time when smoking was prescribed for breathing problems. The duo offered their first smoking cessation seminar in Taunton, Massachusetts in 1960, later releasing the 1962 book Five Day Plan to Stop Smoking for pastors and health experts to offer the program in communities across the United States. McFarland, a physician, and Folkenberg, a pastor, would encourage seminar participants to repeat the phrase in unison and throughout the day, "I choose not to smoke," Time magazine reported in 1963.

The Time article also noted the seminar included a strong spiritual component, similar to support methods of Alcoholics Anonymous. Participants were given specific dietary instructions to accompany the plan and matched with a buddy to monitor each other's progress.

"The five-day plan was enormously successful, it met a real felt need," said Dr. Allan Handysides, Health Ministries director for the Adventist Church.

J. Wayne McFarland was born in Brawley, California on August 11, 1913 and graduated from Madison College, in Nashville, Tennessee. He earned a medical degree from Loma Linda University in 1939 before serving a fellowship in physical medicine and rehabilitation at the Mayo Clinic, in Rochester, Minnesota. He practiced and taught in Philadelphia, first at Temple University Hospital and later at Jefferson University Hospital. He worked for the Adventist Church's headquarters in the 1940s and 50s, editing Life and Health magazine, and helped to establish what is now Adventist-Laymen's Services and Industries, a lay supporting organization of the denomination. Later, while serving as an associate director for the Adventist Church Health Ministries department from 1970 to 1980, McFarland would team up with Adventist evangelists to offer a practical health message to accompany a series' spiritual outreach, something he did in six continents over his career.

After retirement he continued traveling the world, offering smoking cessation support in Russia and serving as a special consultant on health education to the Shenyang Municipality of China.

McFarland received numerous awards from municipalities and universities, including a medallion of merit from the World Health Organization in 1988.

McFarland's seminar partner Folkenberg died in 1986. His nephew, Robert Folkenberg would later serve as the denomination's president, from 1990 to 1999.

McFarland's wife Dolly preceded him in death in 2008. He is survived by two daughters, three grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

--additional reporting by Don A. Roth [tedNEWS]

tedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter's Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: tednews@ted-adventist.org
Website: www.ted-adventist.org

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In Japan, Adventist Church Intensifies Earthquake Relief Effort

24 Mar 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States [ANN]
The Seventh-day Adventist Church continues to rally support in the wake of the 9.0-magnitude earthquake that struck northeastern Japan March 11, spawning a tsunami and widespread devastation.

An Adventist Development and Relief Agency volunteer fills bowls with traditional Japanese miso soup for displaced persons at an area evacuation center. The church’s humanitarian arm is among organizations aiding those most affected by country’s March 11 earthquake. [photo courtesy ADRA International]

The Adventist Church's Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD) voted last week to send $50,000 to the church in Japan for emergency relief, and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency is expanding its response by supporting an evacuation center in Miyagi Prefecture, one of the hardest-hit regions.

The pledge is part of what church leaders in NSD called their "long-term support" as Japan recovers from its worst natural disaster in recorded history.

"When we think of the suffering and damage Japan is going through ... [all] we can do is to humbly ask God to stretch out his healing hands," said Jaeyong Lee, Adventist Church president for NSD. "There is an urgent need for the prayers of the world church for our members in Japan."

Lee visited the country yesterday to better assess damage to Adventist-owned churches and institutions. Early reports indicated that 13 churches, 10 schools and five other church institutions were located in earthquake-affected areas. Meanwhile, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency sent a two-ton truck loaded with food and emergency supplies to assist the approximately 1,300 displaced persons currently housed in an evacuation center.

ADRA has previously provided hot meals for those staying at evacuation centers.

"I was so happy to have [traditional Japanese] miso soup today because it was the first hot meal we had since the earthquake," one young girl at a center told ADRA last week. Cold weather, snow, empty grocery stores and the fear of nuclear radiation are complicating many survivors’ efforts to return to their homes and begin cleanup, an ADRA press release said.

Last week, Adventist world church President Ted N.C. Wilson issued a statement in response to the earthquake, noting the church’s initial relief efforts in the region and urging Adventist worldwide to pray for Japan “during this time of intense need.”

feeNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Desana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter’s Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: fee@ted-adventist.org
Website: www.ted-adventist.org

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BUC Office Rebuild

13 March 2011 Watford, UK [Victor Hulbert, tedNEWS]
Just two years and four months following a devastating fire at the
British Union Conference offices in Watford, England, Pastor Ted Wilson, President of the Seventh-day Adventist World Church, was able to stand outside the doors of the rebuilt office and cut the ribbon – to the applause of several hundred guests who had gathered from as far away as
Scotland and Ireland for the occasion.

Pastor Wilson reflected on the experience of the 12 spies exploring the Promised Land, the negativism of ten balanced by the positive nature of Caleb and Joshua. It would have been easy to be discouraged by the burnt out shell of a building, but using the ‘glass half full’ principle he exhorted the congregation – and those who work in the office, to look to the positive as they use the resources of the office to share the Adventist message more fully in the British Isles.

Architects, builders and planners all had their part of the story to tell, but Watford Town Councillor, Alan Burtershaw summed it up in commenting that the new building had blended the best of the old with a new modern style that, as Victor Pimmoor British Union Conference Treasurer stated, demonstrated “the roundedness of the Adventist faith, drew one’s eyes up towards heaven, and opened up the vista of the ‘Eden’ that is the Stanborough Park estate”.

“It was a perfect day,” reflected Audrey Balderstone, an active member of the Watford community. She was not referring to the weather, which at times was wet and overcast, but to the exhortation from Pastor Wilson, the uplifting music of the Adventist Vocal Ensemble, the history of the work of the church in the British Isles, and the rededication of the BUC office.

Pastor Don McFarlane, British Union Conference President stated his delight that the rebuild process has produced an office fit to serve the needs of a 21st century church. “The challenge for us who work in the office now is to make it, not merely a pleasant workplace,” he said, “but a place where God is impacting the lives of church leaders and where we allow the Holy Spirit to take plans and ideas and make them into living experiences for God’s Glory.” [tedNEWS]

Note: Photos gallery available at www.adventist.org.uk. There will be a video report available by Friday including an interview with Ted Wilson. This will be available via the same website.

tedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter’s Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
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The Secrets of Life Shared with the Thousands

11 March 2011 Targu Mures, Transylvania [Pastor Erno Szasz, tedNEWS]

“The Secrets of Life with Confidence” series of lectures were organised between 18 February and 14 March 2011, in Targu Mures, Transylvania in the Hall of Maros Artistic Ensemble. The evangelistic series was followed on screen in most of the local churches and was broadcasted by Speranta TV (Hope Channel Romania) and Voice of Hope Radio. Other local cable TV companies agreed to include Speranta TV within their programme selection of channels. Interested listeners were also able to access the information and broadcast on the Internet at: www.bizakodoelte.ro, www.sperantatv.ro, and www.remenytv.hu.

The evangelistic series consisted of four parts to explore important issues in the church: youth oriented talks, a health message, Biblical presentations, and concluded with round table discussions on relevant doctrines. In order to run all these programmes, there was also a need for joining different forces of people together. Many pastors, theology teachers, doctors and medical professionals from Romania, Hungary, and Serbia participated and served as presenters in the various areas of the series.

The main speaker of the “Secrets of Life with Confidence” series was Janos Kovacs-Biro, Evangelism Director at the Trans-European Division (TED). The ten evangelistic presentations took place in an overcrowded meeting hall, where a delightful 150-200 attendants were non-Adventists. According to the statistics, the series was followed on the Internet from 77 countries all over the world. Outside of Romanian borders, in Europe there were countless viewers in the countries of Hungary, Serbia, Germany, Italy, Spain, England, Holland, Sweden, Switzerland and Greece, as well as some from the USA, Australia, India and Indonesia. The viewers of the Speranta TV channel were estimated to be around 1 million in Romania and its neighbouring countries. Also, because Romanian subtitles for the series were available on the Speranta TV channel, many Romanian-speaking people were able to understand and view the evangelistic program that was delivered in Hungarian.

The reaction from viewers, whether from TV, in person, radio or the Internet, was so encouraging and deemed the series as being very effective and successful. A text message was received from a 16-year-old girl from Transylvania shortly after the series finished. She says, “I am happy that I followed and viewed such an amazing series. I feel that there are changes in my spiritual life. I am reading much more and spend much more time for my relationship with God. I am sixteen, and I just now realised during this series what an amazing God we have. May God bless those who participated in organising and running this series.”

The series was viewed by many in local churches and homes, in territories with and without an Adventist presence. Pastor Erno Osz-Farkas, President of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Duna Conference Region Hungary, described the results and his deduction on the effectiveness of this Hungarian NET2011 series: “The reception of the series is very positive. The selection of topics is very good and the style of presenting them was also. We could say only good things about the technical production and quality of transmission. The Internet broadcast was perfect as well. At this time we are not able to estimate the exact number of viewers, but we are confident that this series has been another one of God’s excellent tools in spreading the Gospel, and that we will hear a lot in the future about its blessings.”

For all the results we praise God! Soi Deo Gloria! [tedNEWS]

tedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter’s Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: tednews@ted-adventist.org
Website: www.ted-adventist.org

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Record Earthquake Strikes Japan: ADRA Responds

11 March 2011 Silver Spring, Maryland, United States  [Julio C. Muñoz, ADRA] A powerful 8.9-magnitude earthquake shook the island nation of Japan damaging infrastructure and triggering a massive tsunami that swept through Japan’s north-eastern coast, killing hundreds of people according to initial media reports. The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) is responding, coordinating efforts and assessing the needs in the worst hit areas in the northern region of Japan.

ADRA has committed an initial response of $25,000 and has sent an assessment team toward the affected area to evaluate and prepare a broader response. ADRA Japan is providing food and shelter for train passengers that are stranded in Tokyo. This is taking place at the Central Tokyo Seventh-day Adventist Church.

At present, over 1,000 are estimated to be dead and 88,000 missing. Local police are reporting that an additional 200 to 300 bodies have been found in the northeastern coastal city of Sendai with the casualty toll expected to climb. Initial reports indicate extensive damage to infrastructure, including at least three nuclear reactors.

The record quake, the seventh largest in history and the most powerful to hit Japan in at least 100 years, created a 23-foot (7 meter) tsunami that washed away boats, cars, homes, while starting several large fires burned out of control. In the hours following the earthquake more than 50 aftershocks have been recorded, many of them over magnitude 6.0.

ADRA is currently monitoring and evaluating the situation. Updates will be released as response efforts expand.

To send your contribution to ADRA’s Emergency Response Fund, please contact ADRA at 1.800.424 ADRA (2372) or give online at www.adra.org.

Follow ADRA on Twitter and Facebook to get the latest information as it happens.

ADRA is a global non-governmental organization providing sustainable community development and disaster relief without regard to political or religious association, age, gender, race or ethnicity.

For more information about ADRA, visit www.adra.org. [fedNEWS]

Photo credit: REUTERS-Yomiuri

fedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter’s Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: fednews@ted-adventist.org
Website: www.ted-adventist.org

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Interfaith Event in Jordan Opens New Conversation with Islamic World

08 March 2011 Silver Spring, Maryland, United States [Bettina Krause/IRLA/ANN staff] A religious liberty conference held in Jordan last week represents a historic step forward in dialogue between the Islamic world and advocates for religious freedom, organizers said.

The Teaching Respect for Religions Symposium gathered scholars, political representatives and legal experts at the Amman College of Al-Balqa Applied University on March 1. The event marked just the second time the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA) has met in the Middle Eastern in its 119-year history.

Organized in 1893 by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the IRLA is the oldest association dedicated to freedom of conscience for people of all faiths and persuasions.

"This conference has opened up an extraordinary opportunity for meaningful conversation with key Islamic leaders and thinkers about what it means to respect different religious traditions, and to live in harmony with one another," said John Graz, IRLA secretary-general.

"Two of the most powerful forces we can use to fight religious prejudice are knowledge about each other and building personal relationships," Graz said in his address.

The symposium was co-sponsored by the Arab Bridge Center for Human Rights, a non-governmental organization founded by former Jordanian Judge Amjad B. Shammout. It brought together IRLA experts, Islamic scholars and Imams, Jordanian law-enforcement leaders, youth leaders and members of the diplomatic community. Jordan's Prime Minister Marouf Suleiman al-Bakhtli lent his support to the event and was represented by Jirjis Samaw, secretary-general of Jordan's Ministry of Culture.

Delbert Baker, a vice president of the Adventist world church and vice president of the IRLA, spoke to the group about respect and freedom -- principles that he said are mutually valued by both the Islamic and Judeo-Christian worlds. Yet, he said, too often a gap appears between theory and practice. He challenged the audience to analyze whether these principles influence their interactions with people.

In presenting his paper "Beyond Tolerance," IRLA coordinator for Interfaith Relations, Bill Johnsson, defined the difference between respect and tolerance. "Respect" actively affirms an individual's right to religious freedom, while "tolerance" can imply a reluctance to grant people their religious views, he said.

According to Johnsson, Jordan provided an ideal location for the symposium, given its track record as "a moderate Islamic nation that models openness, tolerance and rejection of violence." Johnson helped facilitate an earlier, smaller gathering of religious freedom experts in Amman last year, which he said helped pave the way for this month's more public event. [tedNEWS]

tedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director, Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter's Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: tednews@ted-adventist.org
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Finding Meaning, Significance, Community, Direction and Excitement

In the first part of Leadership as Relationship, we compared what followers' want and leaders do. We discovered that there are many points on which followers and leaders agree. The common ground falls into five interesting categories – meaning, significance, community, direction and excitement. Remembering that leadership is relationship, it makes sense to begin our work in these areas of agreement.

The question now is how do we go about creating an environment in which this becomes a reality. Where do we start? Most organisations, from congregations to multinational organisations, make some formal attempts to create meaning, significance, community, direction and excitement. What do we already have in place? Although there are far more, let's examine a cluster of four opportunities: mission, vision and values, strategic planning, hiring and evaluations; and social gatherings. This is not news; there are no headlines in this list. In fact, they are the standard list used by administrators and managers everywhere. They may be a tired and worn-out quartet but what would they look like if re-energized?

The secret to rejuvenation is in re-framing the task. By looking at the task in a new way, by giving it a new purpose or by turning it upside down, leaders see new relationships and opportunities. How can we take the administrative tasks and routine touchpoints inherent in our leadership positions and create exciting and imaginative ways to respond to the very things followers want? How can we reframe these tasks so that we can create meaning, significance, and purpose?

Mission, vision, values. Although their power may have in the past disappointed us, the very purpose of this trio is to create shared meaning. How can they be rejuvenated? What if the goal was to create a sense of mission rather than write a formal mission statement? What would happen if the emphasis shifted from preparing ‘statements’ to engaging everyone in creating an active on-going narrative? What if we shifted the focus to collecting stories instead of printing a paragraph? Stories would keep the mission current with retelling. “Our organisation is like…” Everyone could add new stories to the developing narrative.

Likewise, vision statements, rather than statements of goals evaluated once a year, would be replaced by a set of questions that guide decision-making throughout the year. The operational question becomes, how will we want to do this tomorrow? Each task becomes an opportunity to practice the future now. Strategic planning. The purpose of planning, and particularly strategic planning, is to set direction. When done imaginatively it can also give individuals a good sense of how their efforts contribute to the whole, or in other words, create significance and excitement. As with many processes, strategic planning has suffered not from visions of grandeur but from the tyranny of details and minutiae. The challenge is to find something that replaces traditional strategic planning. What would happen if a set of questions replaced the traditional targets and goals? A sense of direction would emerge, and, rather than focusing on a solution designed in the past with the data then available, at each decision point we would be guided by strategic questions. The decisions would then be made in ‘real-time’.

Hiring and evaluations. If we think of leadership as relationship, then the points of contact at hiring and evaluation become central to creating a sense of significance. We may have overlooked these moments as important relationship building opportunities. In what ways can we restructure our conversations at these critical moments so they result in active coaching and helpful individual feedback? How can we move from ‘telling’ (typical orientation and evaluation responses) to ‘experience’ (an on-going activity)? Of course, this takes more time and effort. But relationship requires active on-going involvement. For meaning to emerge, engagement must be mutual, stories shared, and feedback frequent.

Social gatherings. Bringing people together promotes connection and builds a sense of belonging. As community gathers, it also provides opportunities to create overall meaning and significance and to affirm individual and group efforts. But meeting without purpose can be counterproductive. How can we make every meeting or gathering count? How can our public and private gatherings build bridges between diverse groups and individuals? How can we change the way we gather in committee meetings and move away from simply conducting business to the imperative of creating the future?

The short list is an easy one. Share stories. Ask questions. Give affirmation. Stories connect persons with history, place and aspirations. Questions such as what do you bring to the organisation and what will you add to the project provide opportunities for the individuals to give something back to the organisation. Affirmations create connections and give added meaning.

Leadership as relationship is best served by shifting the emphasis from ‘telling’ to ‘sharing’, from a focusing on a fixed ‘strategic point’ to developing a ‘sense of direction’, and from simply ‘conducting business’ to ‘creating the future’. The relationship develops by creating a ‘sense of mission’ rather than a ‘mission statement’, a ‘guiding vision’ rather than a ‘vision statement’, and collecting stories rather than lists of words. It remains dynamic and alive with guiding questions rather than remaining static with historically definitive statements. In other words, leadership as relationship can create a dynamic environment for those in the organisation to find meaning, significance, community, direction and excitement.

By David S Penner, PhD, Director of the doctoral leadership program, Loma Linda University
Reflections on Seventh-day Adventist Leadership

There is a growing awareness in the Seventh-day Adventist Church that Leadership Development is very important and that, not only are pastors leaders, but they are the most important leaders in the Church – I use "pastors" in a broad sense here, including all believers who in some way "lead the flock".

What is required of a Seventh-day Adventist church leader today? What should a leader be like? What should a leader do and how? How does a leader grow and develop his/her gifts for leadership, which Paul makes reference to in Romans 12:8?

Today, leadership is difficult, demanding and exhausting. Leaders face new challenges and more decisions at a faster pace. We are expected to make quick choices, prioritize what is most important, delegate that which we don't have time to do, and maintain checks and balances by working effectively in teams.

The matters we were trained to deal with are no longer there. The rapid cultural change has led to a crisis in leadership. One Christian author says that "the major challenge for leaders is not the acquisition of new insights and skills, but also unlearning what they already know. Today's leaders need the courage and ability to risk their false sense of confidence and to surrender their predetermined, "wired" responses, and outdated and inaccurate mental maps."

We are being challenged to change, learn, and grow as an on-going commitment in life. How do we do that?

It helps to begin with a general definition of "leadership". There is much talk of various "leadership styles" these days. But more important than style is substance. We need to know what leadership actually is before we can know the best style in which to do it.

The definition I propose has been proposed by Edwin Locke and captures the essence: "Leadership is the process of inducing others to take action toward a common goal." With this starting-point, leadership includes four parts:

1. Leadership is about relations:
   Leaders must know how to inspire and relate to their followers. If you have no followers, you are not a leader.

2. Leadership is a process:
   Leaders must act and set events in motion. Just holding a position of authority does not make you a leader.

3. Leadership is persuasion:
   Leaders induce or persuade followers to take action. Leaders influence followers by inspiring their trust, acting consistently, and motivating them by words and deeds. Examples of the tools of leadership are: legitimate authority, setting an example, setting goals, team-building, and communicating a vision.

4. Leadership is purpose-driven:
   Leaders act in order that the organisation achieves its mission.

According to this model, church leadership may be defined as "the process of activating church workers (members, volunteers, employees) for the mission of the Church".

This leadership has a fundamental spiritual dimension. Every area includes cooperation with God and following God. Leaders count on God to change people in order to achieve God’s purpose. This happens by the leader’s and his followers’ faith and by the power of the Holy Spirit working in them. Because of that, we say that our work as leaders is “God’s work”.

This spiritual dimension comes across very strongly in J. Robert Clinton’s definition of leadership: “A Christian leader is a person with a God-given capacity and the God-given responsibility to influence a specific group of God’s people toward God’s purpose for the group.”

Spiritual leadership must impact visible reality. If it is not happening through the leader’s actions of persuasion and an active response to them by his followers, it becomes a "spiritualised" leadership which remains in the leader’s heart, takes place in his office, and is seen at best in his spiritual attitude. There is such leadership in the church. I am not impressed by it. This is leadership that abdicates from its responsibility with the excuse of leaving all things to God.

As a ministerial secretary, I once visited a pastor. I asked him to show me his plan for his work. He said: “I intentionally do not have a plan, because I feel I need to leave space for the Holy Spirit to do his work.” This man’s ministry was highly unproductive, although he prayed day and night. His problem was that he was self-centred and therefore irresponsible. He prayed to God about himself, not his responsibility or the people he was to lead. And nobody else in his team, or in the conference, knew what he was doing and why. Others could not relate to his work. He remained a lonely leader with no followers, although he was very “spiritual” in one sense. He longed for God. But he was not a spiritual leader, because he misunderstood true spirituality. He did not see that true spirituality is always action-oriented. It impacts the real world. It impacts God’s people and those who seek him.

Another time, an elected president was invited to sit with the nominating committee and give advice on the candidates to be nominated to form his team. He declared: “I can work with anybody, because I am open-minded and it is God’s work, so he will do it. You may choose whoever you like.” Of course, everybody in the committee thought highly of this man’s tolerance and great faith, while incapable and totally unsuitable persons were nominated to make up his team! Five years later, after conflicts, lack of quality work, and no good team spirit, he was not re-elected because, although being considered a spiritual man, his leadership lacked efficiency. He failed to take responsibility for carefully selecting his team. Why? Maybe he feared personal conflicts, the danger of exposing his personal preferences for or against
people, and the politics in his church, and resorted to a *spiritualising attitude* which always means failure in taking responsibility for the real world.

Of course, there are specific situations when we can do nothing but asking God to intervene, when we are desperate and there are no options. But we must be careful not to abdicate from our responsibility too soon. God has chosen to work through us, and we must do our work well, so that he can add his blessing to what we do.

In *Leadership for Dummies* (1999), it is underlined as the first and fundamental characteristic of a leader that there is a willingness to assume responsibility or *ownership*. Spiritualised leadership is not good enough. Why? It abdicates from its responsibility and authentic faith in God. Such leadership was the repeated temptation Jesus resisted from the Devil, namely, testing God by abusing his leadership role. Jesus said: "Don't put God to the test by abusing your position*, which implies that we must not abdicate from our responsibility and say that God will fix it. Such behaviour means, in fact, that we bury our God-given talent in the ground. It is not leadership for the real world. We know that God performs miracles and that he has all the power in the universe. But we also know that we have been asked to use our brains and abilities and gifts to serve him faithfully and that, if we do that, God will add his blessing to it. And this is particularly important in light of Seventh-day Adventist leadership values.

In Adventism, based on instruction from Ellen White, the *biblical view of man and the biblical view of work are of central importance*. We say that man is not merely a spiritual being but a being to whom harmonious growth depends on an interaction between spiritual, mental (intellectual and emotional), physical and social dimensions. And, as far as work is concerned, it is God's way of forming our character, developing it and refining it, in order to bring glory to the Creator. Something happens to us when God's power, God's gifts, and God's will are allowed to pour out through us to the world. We change. We become like the Creator. We learn to create new things, and new things do not occur without change and growth. Spiritualised leadership fails to allow us to grow, which is God's plan for us.

It is therefore an essential Adventist value that *the spiritual dimension does not function in isolation from the human effort and its impact in the real world*. Our ideal of spiritual leadership, therefore, is being so close to God in our faith that we hear his voice, act according to his will, and seek to achieve his purpose, so that God is performing his acts through us. This will only work if we are humble and see ourselves as God's servants. "Servant leadership" is therefore a better term than "spiritual leadership", because it draws attention to both our attitude and actions as leaders.

Before I proceed, let me prevent a misunderstanding. Just as there are leaders who spiritualise their work, putting all responsibility on God and doing little or nothing themselves, there are of course those who fail by the opposite extreme, i.e. by seeking to do everything themselves and not relying on God at all. God does not enter into their strategies, job descriptions, committees, decisions, conversations and speeches. While working in the church, they see God and his mission as a decoration, a romantic atmosphere which is put on at times, but when that is over the "real work" begins, and that is the human effort.

This is so obviously mistaken for us that I don’t need to spend time here on the obvious dangers of such a view. Emphasising the human effort and forgetting that we are doing God’s work is to fail as leader. Failing in this way is the great temptation for the gifted, well-educated, and hard working leader. There is only one remedy for it, and that is the gift of Christ’s humility (see Philippians 2:3-11).

Another factor leading to this kind of failure in leadership is where the leadership culture is governed by the concept of dictatorship, i.e. the strong and absolutist leader who concentrates all power and initiative to himself. Ultimately, this leadership is based on fear and an enormous misunderstanding of who you are – you think you are better and more perfect than you really are. Jesus taught us in clear words to shun such leadership:

"Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’ " (Matthew 20:25-28)

The system of leadership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is therefore not the presidential system but the *committee system* (see *TED Working Policy O 05*).

"The fruitlead of the [Seventh-day Adventist concept of church] is a representative and constituency-based system. Its authority is rooted in God and distributed to the whole people of God. It recognises the committee system. It provides for shared administration (president, secretary, treasurer) rather than a presidential system. It recognises a linkage of entities (church, conference, union, General Conference) that binds the believers together in a universal fellowship. It assures essential unity of purpose and mission. While the integrity of each entity is recognised (church, conference, union), each is seen to be a part of a sisterhood which cannot act without reference to the whole."

Adventist leaders, therefore, are team leaders and lead so that the whole church is recognised and benefits from their leadership.

Another reason for team leadership is that the leader does not have all knowledge and wisdom. A leader must humbly see his/her own limitations. What the leader lacks can be compensated for by his/her team.

In order to work in a team, the leader needs to have a sound self-esteem and dare to be open. Prestige and position in the system becomes irrelevant in the midst of team work, although, of course, in the end some people have a formal responsibility for what takes place.

A decision will be better founded and have greater success if we have taken the time to involve the team around us, before we go to action. That is why consensus is a virtue in church leadership. It is based on Philippians 2:1-5 which gives the model of Jesus Christ as the greatest servant for..."
Philippians 2:1-5

"If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus..."

In order for leadership to work, therefore we must be deeply connected with the spirit of Jesus Christ. Our devotional life is the key to such leadership. So, care for and cultivate your faith!

In conclusion, applying our model of church leadership helps us see that, by our faith and through the power of the Holy Spirit, we perform leadership in four ways in the church:

1. Church leadership is about relations:
Leaders achieve the mission of the church by inspiring, elevating and leading the people in their organisation, so that they do their assigned work exceptionally well and with joy. This requires an organisation, where it is clear to everybody what their role is – an organisation which is dynamic, flexible and effective enough to accomplish the mission. It also requires a culture, where Seventh-day Adventist values and particularly the value of mission set the tone. Adventist leaders, therefore, need to be effective organisers, peacemakers, and builders of Adventist church culture.

2. Church leadership is a process:
Leaders take action and something happens. They change people and the organisation through their actions. Leadership is not static but dynamic. It strives for excellence and constantly asks if there is a better way to do what we do, in order to achieve the mission. God is active in this process. It is therefore an Adventist tenet that "we must walk in the increasing light". This requires that we see ourselves as leaders functioning as agents of change, God's change.

3. Church leadership is persuasion:
Leaders persuade or induce their followers to act, by various means, for example, by their legitimate authority, by how they manage relationships and conflicts, by the example they set, by goal-setting, encouragement and evaluation, re-organisation, team building, and by communicating a vision. In all of these activities, the leader draws on his personal faith and draws on his biblical values. This requires skills in transparent communication, ability to inspire others, and being a team leader.

4. Church leadership aims at the mission of the Church:
Leaders need to define what this mission is and what it means to themselves and the organisation they lead.

The way God has designed the church’s mission is essential. We find that He has allowed variety in the wording of our mission. Various biblical authors at various times say it in various ways. Jesus taught his disciples a mission to the world which we have in at least four versions, in Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-18, Luke 24:45-49/Acts 1:8, and John 14-17. Luke then describes the fellowship of the first church in Acts 2:42-47. The mission of the church comes out in numerous instructions on church order in Paul's writings. And it has a special significance for Adventists in John's apocalyptic vision in Revelation 14:6-13, where we have found our eschatological mission defined.

But even today, we say it in different ways. The General Conference says it in one way. The Trans-European Division says it in another way. Unions, conferences, churches and institutions say it in yet other ways.

So, obviously, a mission statement can be worded in different ways, although the mission remains the same. The choice of statement reflects what the leader and his team feel should have priority at a specific point in time. For us as Adventist leaders, however, I have found no better wording than the one written by Ellen White in The Acts of the Apostles (p. 9):

"The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God's plan that through his church shall be reflected to the world his fullness and his sufficiency. The members of the church... are to show forth his glory. The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be manifested... the final and full display of the love of God."

If we believe this, a Garfield cartoon becomes pertinent (see adjacent box).
improve? This will be of great importance as we implement our new strategic plan Tell the World.

The TED Tell the World Strategic Plan 2010-2015 is a serious commitment to

- Reach Up by renewing my own faith
- Reach Out by communicating the hope of Jesus Christ within my sphere of influence
- Reach across to embrace and protect the quality and health of my family of faith

If you would like to get hold of the TED Strategic Plan 2010-2015, please contact your union president (in the TED) or write an eml to: apublic@ted-adventist.org

The leader needs to have God’s mission for the world in his/her heart, apply it to his/her work, and communicate it to the followers. This requires a rich personal devotional life, including prayer, Bible reading, fellowship, and witnessing. It requires the skills of a visionary, a strategist, a goal setter, a decision maker, one who is able to show the direction and keep the organisation focused on God’s mission. If you don’t have these skills, build a team of people who have them, pray together and listen to each other. And God will speak through His spirit and lead you all the way!

By Dr. Bertil Wiklander, the President of the Trans-European Division
King James Bible's 400-year reign

05 January 2011 Washington DC, USA [Mark A. Kellner - The Washington Times] Its cadence is found in the speeches of Abraham Lincoln and the lyrics of Paul Simon. Renowned narrator Alexander Scourby and country music legend Johnny Cash have recorded spoken versions of the text. It's estimated that 1 billion copies have been printed since the first volume rolled off the press in 1611.

The King James Version of the Bible, also known as the "Authorized Version," marks its 400th anniversary in 2011, and by any measure, it has had a lasting impact on the world and on the language into which it was sent. The "authorized" moniker comes from a title-page declaration that this Bible was "authorized to be read in churches."

"The sheer poetry of the King James Version, not to mention its almost half-millennium of absolute authority, militates against its slipping into obscurity any time soon," declared Phyllis Tickle, longtime religion editor at Publishers Weekly magazine.

Even noted atheist Richard Dawkins has praise for the volume: "You can't appreciate English literature unless you are to some extent steeped in the King James Bible. There are phrases that come from it — people don't realize they come from it — proverbial phrases, phrases that make echoes in people's minds," he said in a video released by the King James Bible Trust, the British organization that is one promoter of the 400th-anniversary celebrations due next year.

"Not to know the King James Bible is to be, in some small way, barbarian," Mr. Dawkins added.

Indeed, many of its phrases have entered everyday use, among them: "my brother's keeper," "salt of the earth," "give up the ghost," "scapegoat," "an eye for an eye," "casting your pearls before swine," "scarlet woman," "writing on the wall" and "the blind leading the blind."

"A house divided against itself," Lincoln's signature sentiment, was translated that way 250 years before Lincoln was elected president.

Geof Morin, communications director for the American Bible Society, whose New York headquarters will host a King James Bible exhibit next year, called the King James "still relevant" in the age of Twitter and Facebook.

"It was the Bible staring Thomas Jefferson in the face," Mr. Morin said. Its words, he added, were "in the speeches of Abraham Lincoln. It's the language we still use today. It's part of the American psyche, of how we see ourselves as a nation."

But before the KJV — as the version is known by many readers and scholars — came into America's consciousness, it had to arrive on the scene at all. That happened following a contentious 1604 meeting at Hampton Court palace, when a young James VI of Scotland, newly crowned as James I of England, was trying to iron out differences between the Church of England and a dissident sect known as the Puritans.

Putting the Scriptures into English could be a dangerous practice: 16th-century translator William Tyndale was executed. After Henry VIII broke with the Roman Catholic Church, and established the Church of England under the monarch, there were some efforts to approve a complete English-language Bible.

Henry authorized production of what came to be known as the "Great Bible," while the 1583 "Bishop's Bible" followed during the reign of Elizabeth I. In Geneva, English-speaking exiles who opposed Mary I's moves to reconcile with Rome produced the "Geneva Bible," whose translation and margin notes took a decidedly anti-monarchist and anti-clerical stance.

The Hampton Court Conference was drifting into sectarian arguments, historians note, when Puritan leader John Rainolds (also spelled Reynolds), took the bold step of addressing James and asking for a new translation of the Bible, since the previous Bibles "were corrupt and not answerable to the truth of the original."

By almost all accounts, James was delighted: He didn't like the Geneva Bible, and the earlier versions weren't fully up to his standards of scholarship. As a boy, James had immersed himself in Greek and Latin, among other intellectual pursuits. He hardly had known his parents and was installed on the Scottish throne while just a year old with a regent in charge.

It took seven years to create the volume known as the KJV. And while the title page stated it was "newly translated out of the original tongues, and with the former translations diligently compared and revised," the actual work drew more on an earlier English version, said Larry Stone, a former vice president at Thomas Nelson Publishers and author of "The Story of the Bible," a new history of the Scriptures published to coincide with the anniversary.

The translators "were told to follow the 'Great Bible,'" Mr. Stone said in a telephone interview, "and they would compare the translation of the 'Great Bible' with the Greek and the Hebrew. If they wanted to change the wording, it would change for several reasons; either the 'Great Bible' translation was not accurate, or they could say the words better."

And because the 'Great Bible' drew on Tyndale's translations, the 16th-century "thee" and "thou" entered into the King James Version, even though they were long departed from common usage.

Would James I, the only English monarch to ascend the throne as a published author, be happy his eponymous Bible has survived this long?

"I actually think he would be somewhat pleased, because of its longevity," said David Teems, author of "Majesty: The
King Behind the King James Bible," a 2010 biography of the monarch and his most famous book.

A strong believer in the "divine right of kings," Mr. Tooms explained, James was determined "his Bible would reflect his reign, unite realms of Scotland and England. His desire was to unify, and to unify all of Christendom."

While that didn't happen, the impact of the KJV is without question: It quickly displaced the Geneva Bible as the Protestant standard in the English-speaking world, and was often the primary "header" for generations.

Evangelists from Charles Finney to Billy Graham preached from it; Paul Simon derived the phrase "workman's wages" in his song "The Boxer," from reading I Timothy, he once told Rolling Stone magazine.

Author Joe Kovacs, whose 2009 "Shocked by the Bible" explored the lesser-known stories and facts of the Bible text, said he chose the King James to quote in his book because "it's the most well-known and frequently quoted translation."

Beginning in November, Thomas Nelson Publishers, which sold 329,000 printed copies of the King James Bible between July 2009 and July 2010, has mounted a major campaign to promote the text, with a website, www.kjv400celebration.com, and national marketing campaigns.

The firm also is working with the History Channel to promote the anniversary.

"To me, the 400th anniversary, is not just about KJV, but about the Bible. The fact that it is a historic milestone gives us the opportunity to go beyond and look at the impact of Scripture. It's not a translation story; it really is a Bible story," said Carla Bailerini, Nelson's bible group marketing vice president.

Despite the language changes and continued research of the past four centuries, the King James Version retains a great deal of authority, said Alister McGrath, head of the Center for Theology, Mission and Culture at King's College in London.

"The KJV is a surprisingly reliable translation, even though some minor translation changes are necessary on account of advances in our understanding of the manuscript tradition over the last 400 years," said Mr. McGrath, whose 2001 "In the Beginning was a history of the KJV's development.

However, "the day of a single dominant biblical translation is past," he added. "In many ways, the KJV held a monopoly in English from about 1700 to 1960, as no other translation was seen as being significant over that period. Nowadays, there are multiple [English language] translations."

That may be the case, but there may be life in the older text yet: Compare its "Give us this day our daily bread," found in Matthew 6:11, to the rendering in "The Message," a popular modern version: "Keep us alive with three square meals." [teoNEWS]

This book cover is from a commemorative reprint of the 1611 King James Version of the Holy Bible. The King James Bible will celebrate its 400th anniversary in 2011.

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The Story of the King James Bible - Audio

The Commission
The Translation
The Legacy

teoNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
118 St Peter's Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: tednews@ted-adventist.org
Website: www.ted-adventist.org

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Individualism Shines Through Americans' 2011 New Year's Resolutions

As the calendar shifts from holiday celebrations to January, a new survey from the Barna Group explores what Americans describe as their New Year’s resolutions. The nationwide survey of 1,022 adults provides a snapshot of people's personal growth priorities for 2011, when they make such commitments.

The Role of Resolutions?
Making New Year's resolutions is a common experience, but Americans report achieving mixed results. Nearly two-thirds of the nation's population (61%) has made New Year's resolutions at some point in their lives. More than 90 million adults (41%) say they will make such personal pledges in 2011, representing roughly two-fifths of the nation's population.

Yet, only one out of every five (19%) is "definitely" planning to make resolutions, which may be a reflection of either the half-hearted effort many put forth or a recognition of their past failure to follow through on such goals. When asked to describe their experience with resolutions during 2010, only one out of four Americans (23%) who had made resolutions found those commitments resulted in "significant, long-term change" to their behaviors or attitudes. More commonly, Americans described their 2010 resolutions as resulting in "minor change" (29%) or "no change" (49%).

Another reason people may struggle with keeping their resolutions: they try to achieve personal change on their own. Among those who are making New Year’s resolutions, most said they were not planning on having "accountability or a support system in place" to help them stick with those commitments.

What (or Who) Gets Attention?
When it comes to the types of resolutions people make, Americans not surprisingly focus on self-oriented changes. Among those planning to make resolutions, the top pledges for 2011 relate to weight, diet and health (30%); money, debt and finances (15%); personal improvement (13%); addiction (12%); job and career (6%); spiritual or church-related (5%); and educational (4%). Personal improvement responses included being a better person; giving more; having more personal or leisure time; organizing their life or home; and having a better life in general.

While people concentrate on themselves when making priorities for the New Year, it is telling that so few Americans say they want to improve relationships with others. There were virtually no mentions of volunteering or serving others; only a handful of comments about marriage or parenting; almost no responses focusing on being a better friend; and only a small fraction of people mentioned improving their connection with God.

David Kinnaman, president of the Barna Group, explained these findings: "Only 9 out of more than 1,000 survey respondents – that's not quite one percent – mentioned that one of their objectives for next year was getting closer to God in some way. Even in the rare instance when people mention spiritual goals, it is often about activity undertaken for God, rather than a personal pursuit of God or an experience with God."

As further proof of Americans' self-oriented concerns, Kinnaman pointed out that "virtually none of the survey respondents mentioned anything about becoming more green. Despite the significant attention environmental issues receive, virtually no one connects their New Year's resolutions with personal responsibility in this area."

Perspectives on Resolutions
Kinnaman put the findings in context: "Americans maintain a love-hate relationship with New Year's resolutions: millions of people make them, but they rarely report success as a result. This research underscores that most humans want to experience some sort of personal change in their lives, but achieving such objectives is both difficult and uncommon.

"Maybe most problematic, Americans hinge their efforts at personal change by focusing almost exclusively on themselves, rather than realizing that lasting change often comes by serving and sacrificing for others. Churches and faith communities have a significant opportunity to help people identify what makes for transformational change and how to best achieve those objectives – especially by relying on goals and resources beyond their individualism."
Facts about Resolutions
Younger adults are far more likely than older adults to make resolutions. Perhaps less affected by past failed resolutions, younger adults emerged as far more likely than older adults to make personal commitments for the New Year. Among Mosaics, 44% plan to make at least one resolution for 2011, which was second only to the 51% among Busters (ages 27 to 45). Boomers (ages 46 to 64) and Elders (ages 65-plus) were comparatively unlikely to expect to make any resolutions (39% and 26%, respectively).

Disengaged adults do not bother with resolutions. Those who have never made New Year’s resolutions exhibit a disconnected profile in other areas of life as well: they are likely to be non-voters, unchurched adults, atheists and agnostics, and those never married.

About the Research
This report is based upon telephone interviews conducted in the OmniPoll™ (part of the Barna Poll) from the Barna Group. This study consisted of a random sample of 1,022 adults selected from across the continental United States, age 18 and older, December 11 through December 19, 2010. The interviews included 200 among people using cell phones. The maximum margin of sampling error associated with the aggregate sample is ±3.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Minimal statistical weighting was used to calibrate the aggregate sample to known population percentages in relation to several key demographic variables.

Elders are those born before 1946; Boomers are the generation born from 1946 to 1964; Busters are individuals born between 1965 and 1983; and Mosaics are adults born 1984 or since.

“Downscale” individuals are those whose annual household income is less than $20,000 and who have not attended college. “Upscale” people are those whose annual household income is $75,000 or more and have graduated from a four-year college.

Barna Group (which includes its research division, the Barna Research Group) is a private, non-partisan, for-profit organization that conducts primary research, produces media resources pertaining to spiritual development, and facilitates the healthy spiritual growth of leaders, children, families and Christian ministries. Located in Ventura, California, Barna has been conducting and analyzing primary research to understand cultural trends related to values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors since 1984.

If you would like to receive free e-mail notification of the release of each new, bi-monthly update on the latest research findings from the Barna Group, you may subscribe to this free service at the Barna website (). Additional research-based resources are also available through this website.

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The Vision and Direction of Trans-European Division

My mental picture of the desired future of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Trans-European Division is quite simple: I see an active church at the end of time with strong spiritual motivation to extending itself into the world while breaking down barriers. This is not happening in the backyard, but the world sees and feels it.

The Church in my vision functions by simultaneous acts of 'reaching' in a threefold relationship: church members connect with God, the world, and each other. They reach up to God through spiritual formation (nurture). They reach out to the world by faithfulness to God's mission, bringing the gospel to the world, providing works of service, and revealing God's love in their life (mission). They reach across by building each other up in love and respecting each other's differences (community).

I see the Church as a worldwide group of individuals belonging to different peoples, nations, and tribes, and with different languages, standing close together and 'reaching' with their hands: Lifting up their hands to God, they break down the barriers of human solitude, blindness and selfishness, accepting God's sovereignty and following the will of the Creator and Father of all. Lifting up their hands to God, they accept Jesus Christ as the Saviour who removes sin, evil, and death. Lifting up their hands to God, they receive daily power, wisdom, faith, hope, and love from the Holy Spirit.

Extending their hands to known and unknown people in the world, they break down barriers of faith, race, and social conventions, as they connect with the rich and the poor, the young and the old, men and women, people near and afar, friends and enemies. Humbly and yet obstinately and generously, they make God known and present him through their lives so that people are attracted and drawn into relationship with God and his believers. They meet people's needs and offer friendship to all. Their lives find meaning in 'imitating God' (Ephesians 5:1), being doors to communion with God. Embracing with their hands all their family members in God's family, knowing they are children of God, they break down human barriers and fulfill the Christian vision of spiritual unity and caring love (Philippians 2:1-6).

The sign that the Church is fulfilling its calling is the members' joy and thanksgiving. When they are gathered for worship, the service explodes in hymns of praise and joyful celebration of the day fast approaching when God will be acknowledged by all as the One he already is: 'one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all' (Ephesians 4:8).

I pray and work to let God accomplish this vision through me and the people I have been given to work with. I am confident and full of enthusiasm. Greetings with Romans 15:13: 'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit'.

Dr. Bertil Wiklander, the President of the Trans-European Division
Revival and Reformation

TED Response
to ‘God’s Promised Gift’ and ‘Initiatives of the GC R&R Committee’:

Spiritual Growth in Life and Godliness
TED Initiatives 2010 – 2015
Proposal to the TED Executive Committee 14th November, 2010

The apostle Peter, one of Christ’s disciples, said in his second letter:

‘Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness … For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ (2 Peter 1:2-3, 5-8)

In the following section in verses 10-15 Peter underlines how extremely important the Christian disciplines are for the Christian life. This is not a way to earn salvation or God’s acceptance — those gifts are by faith and God’s grace — but, rather, it is a matter of strengthening our faith and growing in life and godliness, in order to live close to God and change into more and more Christ-like personalities.

As a special Messenger to the Seventh-day Adventist community of believers, Ellen White said that ‘A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work.' She also defines revival and reformation in the church as a work by the Holy Spirit:

‘A revival and a reformation must take place under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from the spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganisation, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend.’

In the light of (a) the teachings of the Bible, (b) the counsel of Ellen White, (c) stimulated by the initiatives of the General Conference documents on ‘God’s Promised Gift’ and the ‘Initiatives of the GC Revival and Reformation Committee’, (d) the concept of ‘Stewardship in a Changing World’, and (e) as we enter a new five-year plan for mission, Tell the World, we commit ourselves and encourage all leaders, committees, pastors, members, youth and children to make spiritual revival and reformation our first work through the power of Christ — in his cross, resurrection, heavenly mediation and soon return.

May the Holy Spirit fill our lives and energise us all to take every opportunity to help, heal and save that which has been lost.

We commit ourselves to support and promote the following initiatives to encourage our churches and organisations to make spiritual growth in life and godliness our first work:

1. Making prayer a fundamental part of our daily life (1 Tim. 2:1)
   - Praying alone
   - Praying in groups of two and three (Matthew 18:20)
   - Praying in our families
   - Praying in church fellowships
   - Praying in chains via the Internet
   - Participating in the worldwide Adventist days of prayer and fasting

2. Making Bible reading a fundamental part of our daily life (Ps 119:105)
   - Following a Bible reading plan
   - Using a pocket Bible during the day
   - Apply the book as a whole principle to the reading of verses
   - Use Bible Study Guides and other study tools to enhance the reading
   - Engage in a Bible study group either for nurture or outreach
   - Learning how to give Bible studies to seekers

3. Study and apply the biblical disciplines for spiritual growth
   - Understanding the biblical disciplines by a handbook to be produced by the TED
   - Practising a multitude of spiritual disciplines
   - Apply biblical disciplines as a means of strengthen coping skills (peace of mind, stress management, etc.)
   - Apply biblical disciplines as a means to enhance relationships

4. Being available and engaged in at least one outreach or mission project where I lead one person to Christ
   - Small group
   - Sabbath School Class
4. Participating in personal spiritual growth
   - Bible study at home
   - Assisting the Bible Correspondence School by visiting students
   - Church planting project
   - Bring a friend to church
   - One-to-one

5. Participating in spiritual worship, celebration and fellowship
   - Home congregation
   - Via TV, Internet or Radio
   - Small group or Branch Sabbath School
   - Church Plant


How Perfect Is "Perfect" or Is Christian Perfection Possible?

Edward Heppenstall

To be right with God is the most vital thing in life. Apart from all we do, all we have, what about us as creatures standing before our Creator? How do we stand with God? Paul declares that the only way to be right with God is to be clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ.

I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. (Phil 3:8, 9)

The Sinner's Only Hope

The perfect righteousness of Christ is the only answer to the sin problem in any man's life, the only possibility of living like Christ here and now. "Our righteousness"-the best we can do and are in ourselves-are "as filthy rags" (Isa 64:6). Rags because they do not cover us, and filthy because they leave us in our defilements and our sins. Many sincere Christians express dissatisfaction over the fact that they continually fall short of perfection. Many admit of continual failure in the spiritual life, of repeating sins again and again, of giving way to habit patterns contrary to the life of Christ. When they read the command of Christ: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt 5:48), the effect is both condemnation and discouragement.

In almost all the great revivals believers have sought in one way or another to attain to perfection of living. They have longed for it, prayed for it, and worked for it. But the testimony of all great Christians is that they have never attained to it; that the more they strived and the closer they came to Christ, the deeper was their sense of inadequacy and inherent sinfulness. While their lives bore testimony to victory over sin, at the same time they felt a deeper sense of their own need and unworthiness. Ask Peter, James and John. Ask Martin Luther and John Wesley. Ask the noblest souls that the Christian church has ever seen, the most zealous spirits that mankind has ever produced. With one mighty chorus and with one accord they exclaim with Paul:

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil 3:12-14)

If there is one central truth borne out in Scripture in the experience of all true believers who have come to know the saving power of God, it is this: that the only perfection, the only sinlessness they have ever seen or known has been that of Jesus Christ, the only perfect and sinless man; that because of this Jesus is the whole of their salvation, the whole of their
righteousness and perfection. To be a genuine Christian means faith in Christ, fellowship with
Christ, faithfulness to Christ, and fruitfulness for Christ. Faith means that man has no perfection
and no righteousness of and in himself; that man trusts wholly and solely in Christ.

Biblical Perfection

One of the hindrances to living the Christian life successfully is failure to understand what the
Bible teaches on the nature of sin and perfection. A grave misapprehension lies at the root of
much of the false teaching on this subject. The Bible, in applying the term "perfection" to
believers, never means "sinlessness." There are at least nine different Hebrew words and six
Greek words translated "perfection." Noah is said to be "perfect in his generations" (Gen 6:9). Of
Asa, the King of Judah, we read: "But the high places were not removed: nevertheless Asa's
heart was perfect with the Lord all his days" (1 Kings 15:14). "If any man offend not in word, the
same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body" (James 3:2). "We speak wisdom
among them that are the perfect" (1 Cor 2:6).

The Bible writers are not saying that these men are sinless. The meaning is that of spiritual
maturity, full grown spiritually, ripe in spiritual understanding, whole in response to god,
keeping nothing back. A "perfect" Christian is one whose heart and mind are permanently
committed to Christ, cannot be moved. Noah, Abraham, and Job were all declared to be "perfect"
men. Yet the history of their lives shows that they were far from being sinless.

If one's view of sin is shallow enough, sinless perfection would not be an impossible
achievement. It is a defective view of sin that leads to a wrong understanding of perfection. If sin
simply means a deliberate, willful doing of what is known to be wrong, then no Christian should
commit this kind of sin. But if sin includes also a man's state of mind and heart, man's bias
toward sin, sin as an indwelling tendency, then perfection presents a totally different picture.

What God Expects of His People

There are some Christians who believe that it is possible in this life to reach a point in spiritual
development, where the sinful nature is completely eradicated and therefore, no longer operative.
The Bible does teach that the genuine Christian life is one of uniform and sustained victory over
all known sin. The normal Christian experience should be one of victory and not constant defeat.
Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through
Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in
the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but
yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as
instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not
under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but
under grace? God forbid. (Rom 6:11-15)

There is one truth that every believer needs to learn who would fully enjoy complete salvation
in Christ. It is the need to abide in Christ, to look continually to Christ, to depend wholly on
Christ and His righteousness. God's method of salvation is not eradication of a sinful nature, but
the counteraction of divine power through the Holy Spirit. Only by the continual counteracting
presence of the Holy Spirit is it possible to be victorious over sin and the sinful nature within us.

It is fatal to believe that if only we become totally surrendered to Christ, that the sinful nature
is eradicated. The law of sin and death is still operating within us. It is something that remains in
us as long as we live. Victory over all known sin does not mean sinlessness. It does mean the
glorious opportunity in Christ to strive successfully against all sin and overcome it. But this is an
experience that must be maintained day by day through fellowship with and surrender to Christ. The Christian life is a lifelong battle. So long as the believer abides in Christ, real holiness and victory are possible. What we have in the every-day life is the counteracting power of God against our sinful tendencies and our sinful natures.

O wretched man that I am. Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. (Rom 7:24-8:2)

Salvation in Christ alone means that the bias to sin in human nature is too strong and overwhelming to be dealt with apart from moment by moment trusting in Christ and in His power to save. The law of sin and death is operating all the time. Deliverance comes by means of a higher law, a higher power-the law of the Spirit, the mightiest power of God which counteracts the law of sin in our members. Peter sank in the waves the moment he took his eyes off Christ. He sank because he had the tendency to sink in water. The only thing that kept him walking on top of the sea was the power of Christ momentarily exercised counteracting the gravitational power to pull him down. So it is in the Christian life. There is always a conflict in this earthly life between the flesh and the Spirit:

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. (Gal 5:16-18)

The Christian must walk continually in the Spirit. Never in this life will the Christian arrive at the place where he can dispense with the counteracting power of Christ against the sinful tendency in his life. Only through the continual, day by day operation of the Holy Spirit is our sinful nature counteracted. The sinful nature is not eradicated until the day of the resurrection, until this "mortal shall have put on immortality." The Christian learns to live in the sphere of the Spirit, not in the sphere of the flesh. The believer is never beyond the reach of temptation or the possibility of sinning. But in Christ he is brought into a position of victory over all known sin. Sin no longer has dominion over him.

Sinful Nature: Controlled But Not Eradicated

The greatest men in the Bible never claimed sinless perfection. They were all painfully aware of the fact that they were sinners and remained so throughout their lives. So long as a man is in a state of sin with a sinful nature still present in him, he will confess himself to be a sinner. The Christian always recognizes himself to be a sinner in need of divine grace. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (1 John 1:8-10) We find here the most solemn warning against the doctrine of sinless perfection in this life. The incontrovertible meaning of this passage is that the man is a self-deceiver who claims for himself what the apostle John dared not claim. The truth is not in him. The doctrine of sinless perfection leads to the conclusion that both Christ and the Holy Spirit are unnecessary once this state of eradication of the sinful nature is reached. Wherever the professed Christian claims to have the sinful nature eradicated in his life, there is a corresponding loss of true dependence upon Christ. There is a break in the only saving relationship that man needs for victory. This allows people to sin and
call evil good. It discourages those who strive to be like Christ, but fall short of this false idea of perfection. It is God's will that, having surrendered to Christ at conversion as best he knows, the believer will maintain that attitude that as fast as anything further is revealed to him contrary to the will of God, he will promptly give that up also. God will see to it that throughout the Christian life here on earth, there will be deeper insights into the sinfulness and selfishness of our own natures. There will be increased dependence, increased repentance, and prayer for forgiveness. The believer will never come to the place where he will not pray the Lord's prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." By this increased insight, we shall continually need an increased "looking unto Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith." There are no limits to God's power. He is always willing and able to give us the victory. But man limits God by virtue of his lack of insight and lack of surrender. In proportion to the maturity and completeness of his knowledge will be the completeness of his surrender and victory.

By Grace Alone: True Meaning

The basic doctrine of the Christian faith is salvation by grace alone. This doctrine represents the final renunciation of either human effort or the human claim to perfection. Christ is our sole perfection, our sole righteousness. In ourselves we are never sinless. But so long as we look to Christ, sin and self cannot prevail.

The pretension to sinless perfection at any time in this earthly life is the root of spiritual pride and self righteousness. The Christian does not deny that the new life in Christ is capable of a new righteousness, of victory over sin. He only insists that it is not his righteousness, not his victory, but Christ's.

There will be no point in spiritual achievement in this life where one may rest with the certainty that he will sin no more, or that he does not stand before God as a sinner in need of divine grace and power. The Christian knows that there still remains in him a fountain of evil, a depraved nature.

Salvation by grace alone means that absolute perfection and sinlessness cannot be realized here and now. Righteousness by faith means that we look continually and exclusively to Christ; that we look away from ourselves and any hope in ourselves altogether in order to live out of Him alone. Genuine salvation directs us at once to Christ, to the only perfect life lived here on the earth, and to His redemption through the Cross. What is absolutely central is Jesus Christ. Man's victory over sin is exclusively the work of God in Christ, the continual control of the life by the Holy Spirit; that through daily union with Christ we actually participate in Christ's holy life.

The righteousness of Christ that saves is not the beginning of a new self-righteousness, but the perpetual end of it. It is a perpetual living in Christ from a center and source beyond us and our wisdom and power. We live continually out of a risen Christ and never out of ourselves. Victory is through the continual operation of the Holy Spirit, because the Christian life consists in the fruits of the Spirit and the power of God.

.Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist
Leadership and Ordination of Women

In February 2010 the General Conference asked the world Divisions to carry out a survey among the leadership in their constituency to gain a clear understanding of their position on women's ordination to the gospel ministry. As part of that process the following observations were shared with the divisions by the General Conference:

Observation #1: For more than three decades the Church has engaged in discussion about the role of women in the Church. After much study no consensus has been reached as to whether or not the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy advocate or deny the ordination of women to ministry. The Church has affirmed its purpose “to bring qualified women into a broader participation in church leadership and into increasing responsibilities for implementation of church programs.” In the course of these discussions, provision has been made for women to serve as church elders and pastors. The ordination of women as church deaconesses and elders has been approved “where the division found it applicable, or possible, or profitable in their situation.”

Observation #2: The doctrine of spiritual gifts (see Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-28; Ephesians 4:8, 11-16; Acts 6:1-7; 1 Peter 4:10, 11) teaches that God gives gifts for service to all without respect to race or gender. Included among the gifts are those of evangelist, prophet, teacher, and pastor. Seventh-day Adventists understand ordination to be the Church’s recognition and affirmation of a person’s gifts for spiritual leadership. Unlike the Roman Catholic view of ordination, the Seventh-day Adventist view holds that ordination does not confer an added gift or infusion of grace which bestows an authority from God that is not already present before the ceremony of ordination.

The outcome of the survey within the Trans-European Division was that while two or three unions were not prepared to ordain women due to cultural considerations, all thirteen supported women’s ordination in principle within the TED.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church within the TED faces extraordinary mission challenges where people are extremely resistant to the gospel and joining a church is an exception rather than the norm. To effectively meet this need the church needs to mobilize all members for ministry and outreach, including women, who constitute two thirds of the membership. Opening the doors for women in leadership and the ordination of women would strengthen the growth of the church in Europe.

Within the church and European society at large gender equality and excellence in leadership are priorities. In many of the TED territories it is, or soon will become, illegal to make any differentiation on the basis of gender.

The TED has made significant progress with the appointments of a female Division Secretary, a woman union secretary in Finland, a union and a conference treasurer in Hungary, a conference secretary/treasurer in Iceland and Slovenia, a conference treasurer in the South Conference of the South-East European Union and principal and bursar at Newbold College. In response to a statement from the Women’s Pastor’s Council at Newbold in 2009 the then executive committee at its Winter Meetings in November of the same year voted to make the ministerial career paths for men (ordination) and women (commissioning) of equal value and transferable within the Division.

It is our Christian and moral obligation to promote and practice gender equality at all levels of our church organisation. However, the possibility remains that we may not be measuring up to our secular and legal responsibilities, which could leave the church open to legal action under equal opportunities legislation.

A two track approach to respond to these issues and enable the church to live up to its legal obligations in policy and practice is:

Policy

Policy and documentation should be reviewed to ensure that it is gender neutral, providing equal opportunities for both ordained (male) and commissioned (female) ministers.

Practice

To promote and encourage women in leadership it is necessary to create opportunities at grass roots level for women. The more women who participate in local leadership the more opportunities there are for participation in wider spheres of leadership. Research shows that women in ministry tend to:

- be offered and accept secondary ministerial roles to accommodate their family situations
- work part time because of the pressures of home, family and work
- take time out from ministry because of family commitments
- work in ministry on a volunteer basis or for nominal pay
- accept other alternatives such as chaplains, cyber pastors etc.

These practical issues should be addressed if any significant progress is to be made and to avoid possible accusations of discrimination.

Recommendations

1. To request that the study of the theology of ordination as voted at the General Conference Session in Atlanta is prioritized.
2. To request the General Conference to review and amend General Conference policies, so that the wording is gender neutral and that all leadership pathways are open to male and female.
3. To request the General Conference to grant a variance to the model constitutions and bylaws to accommodate the unique needs of the Trans-European Division with the insertion of “committee and union...”
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4. To request the General Conference for permission to ordain women to the gospel ministry within the Trans-European Division thereby creating parity between female and male ministers and follow the same process and procedure as currently applies to ordained men and credentialed ministers.

1. The European Social Charter, which supplements the European Declaration of Human Rights states in Article 20 that there should be equality in all stages of working life—access to employment, remuneration and other working conditions, including dismissal and other forms of detriment, vocational training and guidance and promotion.


5. Ziemund, Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling, p. 84.